

by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 7 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Sec-

retary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on the Palestinian Presidential Election *January 9, 2005*

I am heartened by today's strong turnout in the Palestinian elections. Palestinians throughout the West Bank and Gaza took a key step toward building a democratic future by choosing a new President in elections that observers describe as largely free and fair. This is a historic day for the Palestinian people and for the people of the Middle East.

America and all free nations strongly support the efforts of the Palestinian people to create lasting democratic institutions. These efforts—including today's Presidential elections and the parliamentary elections that will follow in several months—are essential for the establishment of a sovereign, independent, viable, democratic, and peaceful Palestinian state that can live alongside a safe and secure Israel. These elections are further proof that, when given a choice, all peoples seek to live in liberty and to choose their own government.

The United States stands ready to help the Palestinian people realize their aspirations. The new Palestinian President and his cabinet face critical tasks ahead, includ-

ing fighting terrorism, combating corruption, building reformed and democratic institutions, and reviving the Palestinian economy. We look forward to working with him and the Palestinian people to address these challenges and to advance the cause of Middle East peace consistent with the vision I set forth on June 24, 2002, of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. Other countries also have constructive and vital roles to play. Israel must help to improve the humanitarian and economic situation in the West Bank and Gaza and follow through with the Disengagement Plan. The Arab States must take concrete steps with all parties to create a regional environment conducive to peace, lend financial support to the Palestinian people, and refuse to assist or harbor terrorists. The United States is looking carefully at how we can best organize and fund our own efforts to help the parties achieve a lasting peace.

NOTE: In his statement, the President referred to President-elect Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority.

Statement on the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement Comprehensive Peace Agreement *January 9, 2005*

I congratulate the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement on the signing of a comprehensive peace agreement. I thank all the officials

of the United States Government who have worked hard to help achieve this agreement, including Secretary of State Colin Powell, former Special Envoy for Sudan,

Ambassador John Danforth, and the Special Humanitarian Coordinator for Sudan, USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios. I also thank the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, which sponsored the talks, and the Government of Kenya, which hosted them, and the Governments of Norway and the United Kingdom and the African Union, which played constructive roles for peace.

Both sides should be proud of this accomplishment. The difficult work of implementation must now begin. Only the implementation of this agreement in good faith can result in long-term peace and development.

As we celebrate this positive movement toward peace in the longstanding North-South conflict, we remember the conflict in Darfur and the suffering it causes. This comprehensive peace agreement should serve as an inspiration and model for both sides in their work toward negotiating a peaceful resolution of the Darfur conflict. I call on the Government of Sudan and on all Darfur rebel groups to live up to their cease-fire commitments, to end atrocities, and to allow the free movement of humanitarian workers and supplies. The United States will continue to assist the people of Darfur in reaching a just and lasting peace.

Remarks Following a Briefing on Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunamis Disaster Relief and an Exchange With Reporters *January 10, 2005*

The President. Mr. Secretary, welcome back. I want to thank Secretary Powell and Andrew Natsios and Mike Brown and Marc Grossman for taking the lead on behalf of our Government and the American people and providing relief for the victims of the tsunamis.

The Secretary has given me a extensive briefing on what he has seen, on the unbelievable damage, particularly in Banda Aceh. He's also brought me up to date on the extraordinary efforts by the United States Government and the United States people, along with governments around the world, to provide much needed relief to those who've suffered. We're now entering a second phase of providing for rehabilitation to these affected societies as well as a reconstruction effort.

And as the Secretary said yesterday, the Government of the United States is committed to helping the people who suffer. We're committed today, and we will be committed tomorrow. The outpouring of support from the citizens of our country

has been more than heartening. It has been very strong. And I want to thank those who have felt like—felt the need to contribute directly to the relief efforts. I urge them to go to the usafreedomcorps.gov web site to make sure that their cash contributions are funneled to programs which are having the necessary effect of providing relief, eventually rehabilitation and reconstruction, to those who have suffered.

And so, Mr. Secretary, I want to thank you. Andrew, I'm looking forward to going over to your headquarters to thank those NGOs who have been working hard as well as those in your agency who have worked so incredibly hard to show the compassion and decency of the American people during this time of extraordinary crisis.

I'll answer a couple of questions. Jennifer [Jennifer Loven, Associated Press].

Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunamis Disaster Relief

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. This long-term commitment by the United States to